sheet, and said plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

15. (Canceled)

REMARKS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 6-14 are presently pending in this application, Claims 9 and 10 having been withdrawn from further consideration by the Examiner, Claims 4, 5 and 15 having been canceled, and Claims 1 and 11 having been amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 11, 12 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for being indefinite; Claims 1-8 and 11-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over McGuire et al. (U.S. Patent 6,254,965 B1) in view of Japanese Patent No. 404154573A (hereinafter "JP '573") and Akahori et al. (U.S. Patent 5,310,587).

With regard to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, Claim 15 has been canceled, and Claim 11 has been amended to clarify the subject matter recited therein. Thus, Claims 11 and 12 are believed to be in compliance with the requirements of the statute. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to derive mutually satisfactory claim language.

Claim 1 has been amended herein. This claim amendment finds support in the original specification, claims and drawings. For example, amended Claim 1 is supported by page 12, line 24, to page 13, line 9, of the specification. Hence, no new matter is believed to be added thereby.

Briefly, Claim 1 of the present invention is directed to a kitchen sheet including a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate having an air permeability of 5 $cc/cm^2/sec$ or more as measured in accordance with JIS L1096A, the base sheet having a plurality of convex portions giving the kitchen sheet an apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and the plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively. By providing such an apparent thickness and convex portions on a base sheet, the kitchen sheet not only supports food upon the convex portions but also provides passageways sufficiently large to vent water vapor more efficiently and effectively when used in a microwave oven, thereby reducing the surface area in contact with the food and preventing undesirable condensation on the kitchen sheet.[1]

McGuire et al. disclose three dimensional nesting-resistant sheet materials. Nevertheless, McGuire et al. do not teach "a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate having an air permeability of 5 $cc/cm^2/sec$ or more as measured in accordance with JIS L1096A, said base sheet having a plurality of convex portions giving said kitchen sheet an apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and said plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively" as recited in amended Claim 1. As such, the McGuire et al. sheet material is believed to be less

[1] Specification, page 10, line 10, to page 13, line 21.

effective in reducing the surface area in contact with the food and preventing undesirable condensation on the kitchen sheet when used in a microwave oven. Therefore, the structure recited in amended Claim 1 is believed to be distinguishable from McGuire et al.

Likewise, JP '573 and Akahori et al. disclose a packaged body for food and a wrapping for food, respectively, but neither JP '573 nor Akahori et al. teach "a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate having an air permeability of 5 $cc/cm^2/sec$ or more as measured in accordance with JIS L1096A, said base sheet having a plurality of convex portions giving said kitchen sheet an apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and said plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively" as recited in amended Claim 1. On the other hand, JP '573 only discloses a perforated, e.g., pierced, slit, or incised, hydrophobic sheet. Therefore, the structure recited in amended Claim 1 is clearly distinguishable from JP '573 and Akahori et al.

Because none of McGuire et al., JP '573 and Akahori et al. discloses the base sheet as recited in Claim 1, even the combined teachings of these cited references would not render the structure recited in Claim 1 obvious.

For the foregoing reasons, amended Claim 1 is believed to be allowable. Furthermore, since Claims 2, 3, 6-8 and 11-14 ultimately depend from Claim, substantially the same arguments set forth above also apply to these dependent claims. Hence, Claims 2, 3, 6-8 and 11-14 are believed to be allowable as well.

In view of the amendments and discussions presented above, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early action favorable to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 4, 5 and 15 without prejudice, and amend Claims 1 and 11 as follows:

--1. (Twice Amended) A kitchen sheet comprising a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate having an air permeability of 5 $cc/cm^2/sec$ or more as measured in accordance with JIS L1096A, said base sheet having a plurality of convex portions giving said kitchen sheet an apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and said plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

11. (Amended) A kitchen sheet according to claim 6, wherein the at least two layers further comprise at least one of a first inner layer including a nonwoven fabric [and configured] comprising at least one of [absorb] water absorbing fibers and oil absorbing fibers and a second inner layer including a nonwoven fabric comprising an ultrafine hydrophobic fiber.

15. (Canceled)--